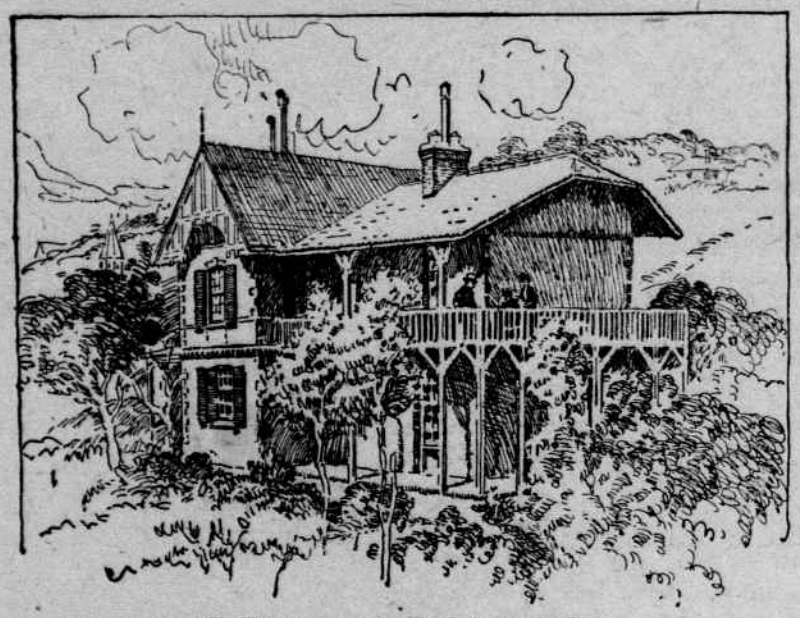

De Maupassant's Chalet at Etretat.

Chronicle and Comment

Continued from Page Six

madness had already been foreshadowed by such tales as "Fou" and "La Horla." But within a week after the return from Sainte-Marguerite he made two attempts at suicide. Francois related that about two o'clock one morning, when on board the yacht Bel-Ami, he was awakened by a noise. His master stood before him, his neck covered with blood. "I have cut my throat, Francois," he said, "it is a clear case of madness." Francois called for help, and aided by one of the sailors of the wach, stanched the bleeding as best he could till the arrival of a physician. While the doctor took stitches in the wound the patient remained perfectly calm and silent. Stretching out his hand to Francois and the sailor he asked their pardon for the trouble he had caused them. That was one of the few remaining lucid moments. A few nights later he woke Francois. "War is declared!" he cried. "We must depart!" He imagined that Germany and France were fighting again.

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THAT idea that the Germans were invading France became an obsession. Again and again he cried, "We must rush to the defense of the eastern frontier!" He turned his military papers over to Francois for safekeeping. The mental night that had closed in upon him was to endure for eighteen months. De Maupassant in the *maison de sante* of Dr. Blanche is not a pleasant spectacle. The great brain was about as useless as a dish of porridge. There were periods of gibbering and violence. He believed himself to be pursued by invisible enemies. Once he hurled a billiard ball at the head of another inmate of the asylum. At times his madness took the form of a belief in his own stupendous wealth —*the folie des grandeurs* is the French expression—when he would rush about calling to an imaginary broker to buy the French *rentes, en bloc.* It was in one of the rare hours of lucidity that he died, July 6, 1893. "He went out like a lamp that has no more oil," was one description of his end.

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THE brightest period of the life of Guy de Maupassant was the period of his productivity, the years from 1880 to 1890, during which he published six novels, sixteen volumes of short stories, three volumes of travels, besides many newspaper articles that have not been included in the various editions of his works. He had been writing before 1880, but his master, Flaubert, allowed him to publish nothing until "Boule de Suif" appeared in the "Soirees de Medan." From 1880 to 1890 Maupassant averaged rather more than three books a year, achieving that result by the regularity of his work. He wrote every morning from 7 o'clock until noon, turning out at least six pages a day, and expression came to him so easily that he rarely erased. Contrary to general opinion, he made a preliminary draft of his story. One of his friends told that he never went to bed without having made notes of all that had impressed him during the day.

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MAUPASSANT was exceedingly careful in the matter of minute details. For example, in the familiar "La Maison Tellier," over which he worked for months, there is a scene introducing English and French sailors. Being entirely ignorant of English Maupassant went to Tourgeneff in order to inform himself exactly as to the words of "Rule Britannia." Incidentally, the valet Francois told of an English lord who was very curious to see the actual house of "La Maison Tellier." So in company with the novelist he traveled to Fecamp, which is the scene of the tale, and there Maupassant pointed out a structure and the Englishman promptly recognized it by the description in the story. As a matter of fact, the "Maison Tellier" was situated in reality at Rouen, but Maupassant had reasons of his own for transporting the narrative from the Norman capital to the seacoast town. During the years when he was in the full swing of popularity Maupassant's earnings from his pen were probably as large as those of any French novelist with the exception of Zola. For his novels he was paid serially a franc a line; for the slightest short story his minimum rate was 500 francs.

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THERE is said to exist a set of Maupassant's books on the margins of which he jotted down the real names of every person and place he described. He carried the passion for personalities even further than did Alphonse Daudet. Until a year or so before the war the original of Georges Duroy of "Bel-Ami" was a well known figure in Paris, driving daily through the Bois in his victoria, for he held the motor car to be an intrusion and the plaything of the vulgar. The real Boule de Suif was named Adrienne Legay, who lived in Rouen at the time of the War of 1870 and who died in poverty about twenty-five years ago. The heroine of "Une Vie" is said to have been drawn from Maupassant's own mother. The heroine of "Notre Cœur" was the above mentioned lady in the pearl gray dress. The originals of Olivier Bertin and the Comtesse de Guillery of "Fort Comme la Mort" and of Forestier and Madame Forestier, Clothilde and M. and Mme. Walter of "Bel-Ami" were perfectly well known to a score of Maupassant's intimate friends.

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THE personal Maupassant was probably not the most amiable of men. In some ways he seems to have been a good deal of a snob. He professed to prefer the company of men and women of society to association with his fellow literary workers. Yet his liking for the "great world" was never thoroughly genuine. He became a man of fashion; he was sought after and welcomed in the most exclusive circles; to his talent even the doors of the old nobility were opened. yet his attitude was always one of cold politeness and affected disdain. He was always seeking change in travel. He loved the sea, and his splendid physical strength enabled him to buffet the waves for hours at a time. He rescued Swinburne when the English poet was drowning. His first literary earnings were spent on a house at Etretat, erected according to his own ideas. Then he bought the yacht which he christened the Bel-Ami, and in it devoted months to cruising along the shores of the Mediterranean. Also there were voyages to Corsica, Italy, Sicily and Algeria.

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THE book of the valet Francois is something of a curiosity. It may be taken for granted that nearly every reader of THE NEW YORK HERALD book section has a sound knowledge of Thackeray's "Pendennis." In that novel the hero's uncle, Major Arthur Pendennis, had a man servant, Morgan, who, leaving his master's service after a slight misunderstanding, debated whether he should go in for literature or politics. Had he chosen the former profession and become the historian of the grim old warrior he had served so long the result might have been a book much in the vein of "Recollections of Maupassant's Valet." For to the valet the master is above a dandy and a man of the world. It was no doubt very fine to have written "Une Vie" and "Bel-Ami"; but what really stirred the pride of Francois and made him assume airs over other gentlemen's gentlemen was Maupassant's position as a boulevardier; his friendships with aristocratic names; his successes with women.

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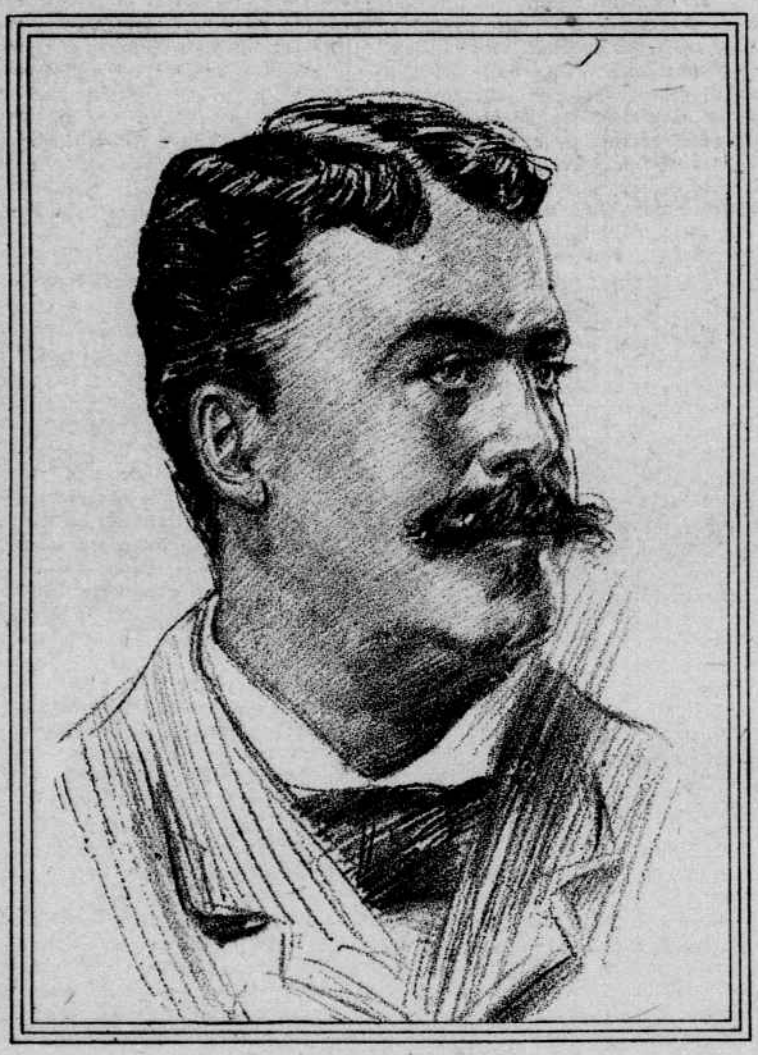
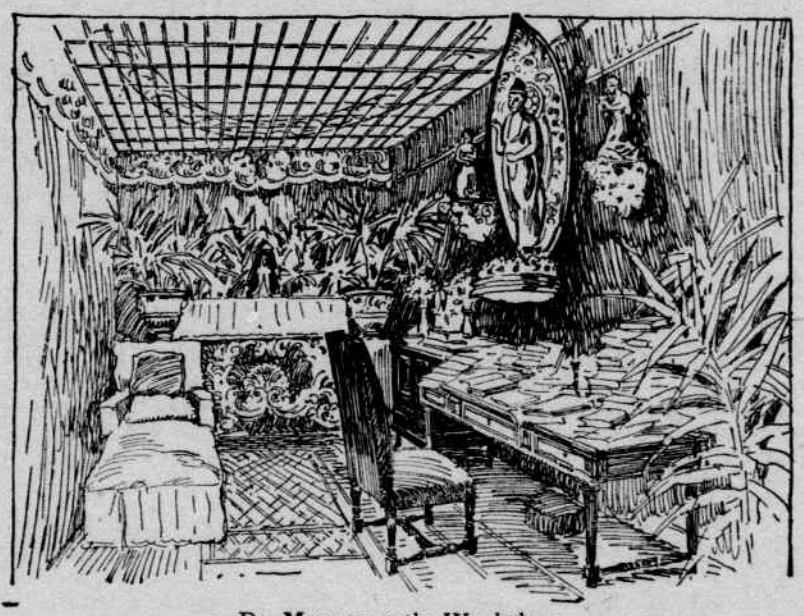
YET occasionally Francois condescended to throw light upon Maupassant the craftsman. For example, the publication of "Fort Comme la Mort" in March, 1889, was a triumph for Maupassant, but it brought him so many visits from aspiring writers that he began to complain. Francois quotes him:

> "They tire me to death. I want the mornings for my work, and really they are becoming too numerous. Henceforth I will receive them only by appointment. Of course I like to be of use to them; but very often what I tell them does them no good. Now that young fellow who has just left me; it is a waste of time to give him good advice; he is too dissipated. He never thinks about his work, and yet imagines he will become a novel writer!



Guy De Maupassant.



De Maupassant's Workshop.